

the unemployment benefits, and the Republicans have objected every single time. Why?

They wrote a letter. Yesterday, the Republican leader had a letter signed by every single Republican in the Senate that said they will not allow any bill to pass the Senate unless and until we pass a bill giving tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. It almost begs credulity. You wonder, is this real? Do they really mean that? Well, they signed their names to it. That means we can't extend unemployment benefits until we give in, until we give in to the Republicans and give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. What a deal. What a deal—holding people who are at the end of their ropes—the most vulnerable in our society—holding them hostage for their Wall Street friends.

I have heard this said by some on the other side: Well, unemployment benefits make people lazy. If you give them unemployment benefits, they won't look for work.

Well, let me talk for a minute about what the labor market looks like right now, and we will see if these people are really lazy. Right now, there are 15 million people who want a job and can't find one but 9 million people forced to work part time because they can't get a full-time job. There are a number of other people who have looked for a job, and they have given up. They have been out of work for 2 years. As the Presiding Officer knows, after 99 weeks, you don't get any unemployment benefits whatsoever, and a lot of people have been out of work for over 99 weeks. They have nothing. That means our unemployment rate is not around 9 percent; it is actually about 17 to 18 percent. And these unemployed workers are looking for work.

What people have to understand is that before you can get unemployment benefits, you have to be actively looking for work. It is a requirement in order to get it. But what is happening out there? Workers can't find jobs because there aren't any. There is one job for every five workers. Well, it says here: 14.8 million workers unemployed. That is not really true. It is actually about 26 million. That is 14.8 million unemployed, but when you include those who have given up because they have gone beyond 99 weeks, when you take into account those who work part time because they were working full time but now they can only get a part-time job, it adds up to almost 26 million.

Let's just take the Bureau of Labor Statistics as they are: 14.8 million workers, 2.9 million jobs, 1 for about every 5. Actually, it is fewer than that. If you really look at the overall picture, it is really more like 1 in 8 to 1 in 10. So, in other words, for about every 8 to 10 workers, there is 1 job out there someplace. So most workers will lose on this kind of game of musical chairs. When you run around and the music stops, one person gets a job and six or seven people don't have one. So I chal-

lenge my Republican friends: How can six or seven or eight people find a job when there is only one available? That is why we have so many people facing long-term unemployment.

Over 6 million people have been out of work for more than half a year. I saw a lot of them who were here in Washington yesterday. Four in 10 workers, what we call the long-term unemployed, have been unemployed and looking for a job for at least 6 months. This is higher than during any previous recession.

There are extensions going back to 1950. In terms of the share of the total unemployed—you can see the graph here—in terms of who has been unemployed for more than 6 months—and as we can see, as we go from the 1950s to here, look at where this line now goes in 2010: more than we have ever had going clear back to the 1950s. Long-term unemployed, higher than any previous recession. It is the highest in 60 years. They are being held hostage by the Republicans.

Long-term unemployment is especially common among older workers over aged 50. These are people who have worked all their lives, they have saved for retirement, they have lost their jobs, and they are having a very difficult time finding new work. A year, year and a half, 2 years—I have met people out of work for well over 2 years. Again, they can't find work because it is not there, through no fault of their own.

So, as I said, our economy needs at least 11 million jobs—at least. To say that people who are unemployed are lazy and shouldn't get benefits—if you say that, you are obviously out of touch. You are out of touch with the real world and what is happening out there and the difficult circumstances that face our hard-working American families.

I get a lot of letters—and I am sure the occupant of the chair does too from his home State—from people who are just at their wit's end, and they just tear your heart out.

A 50-year-old woman from Altoona has been unemployed since November 2009, a year and a month. She wrote me: "I can't even get a job at McDonald's right now, and believe me, I have tried everywhere." Unemployment insurance is helping her get by, but she is worried about running out of benefits, which just happened 2 days ago. I got this letter before 2 days ago. Her unemployment benefits are out.

An unemployed schoolteacher from Estherville wrote me. She said:

I have not felt so humiliated in 20 years. I have been a productive and hard-working woman since I was 13, but now I feel insignificant.

She wrote me that this summer. This month, she wrote me again. She said:

I have tried to find employment in other States, all over Iowa, in every form of employment you can imagine: convenience stores, fast food, factories. I am a high school math teacher with three college de-

grees and I can't find a job. If it weren't for unemployment, I would be on food stamps.

But without unemployment insurance, she doesn't know what she is going to do. She just lost hers a couple of days ago too.

These are just two examples, but there are millions. In this holiday season, from now until the new year, 2 million people will be cut off if we don't continue these programs. In Iowa, my home State, more than 10,000 people will be cut off from their benefits during this holiday season. And if we don't do anything, we will face 6 million by April left without any source of income, hanging by a thread. Their savings are exhausted. Their unemployment benefits are the thin lifeline keeping them afloat.

Congress has never cut back emergency unemployment benefits when the unemployment rate was as high as it is now, and this is no time to start. Here it is again. Going back to 1959, when we had high rates of unemployment, every single time, Congress passed emergency funding to keep unemployment benefits going—that is, until now.

Republicans have said, oh, they will extend it, but they want to pay for it. It is about \$56 billion to extend it for 1 year. They have to pay for it, and how they want to pay for it is to take money out of the Recovery Act. There is still some unexpended money there that is going out for things such as roads and bridges and infrastructure projects that put people to work. So they want to take money from that, which is giving people some jobs and helping build our infrastructure, to put into unemployment benefits, when, going back to 1959, through Republican and Democratic administrations, we have always said this is an emergency, and that is the way we fund it.

Well, the Republicans say, we have a huge deficit. We can't do that anymore. Then why are they so intent on passing a tax cut bill, extending a tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and they don't pay for it? They put it on the deficit—not for \$56 billion but for \$700 billion. Oh, they are willing to do that. They are willing to do that for the wealthiest but not for people at the end of their rope, the unemployed.

So I guess we have entered a new era in this country. We don't help the unemployed: we just help the wealthy. That is all we do. That is why we are here, I guess. Look at that. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. I ask, have my Republican friends lost all sense of fairness? Have my Republican friends on the other side of the aisle lost all sense of justice? Have they lost all sense of what is right and what is wrong? Where is the moral outrage? Where is the moral outrage that we are going to let people stand in the soup lines for Christmas but we are going to give tax breaks to the wealthiest? We are going to give million-dollar bonuses to the people on Wall Street who, by the way, caused a lot of these problems, and we won't even make them